

Sūrah Al-Ḥadīd

(The Iron)

This Sūrah is Madanī, and it has 29 verses and 4 sections

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 6

سَبَّحَ لِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۖ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ ﴿١﴾ لَهُ
 مُلْكُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۖ يُحْيِي وَيُمِيتُ ۖ وَهُوَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ
 قَدِيرٌ ﴿٢﴾ هُوَ الْأَوَّلُ وَالْآخِرُ وَالظَّاهِرُ وَالْبَاطِنُ ۖ وَهُوَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ
 عَلِيمٌ ﴿٣﴾ هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ فِي سِتَّةِ أَيَّامٍ ثُمَّ
 اسْتَوَىٰ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ ۖ يَعْلَمُ مَا يَلْجُ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَمَا يَخْرُجُ مِنْهَا وَمَا
 يَنْزِلُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ وَمَا يَعْرُجُ فِيهَا ۖ وَهُوَ مَعَكُمْ أَيْنَ مَا كُنْتُمْ ۖ وَاللَّهُ
 بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ ﴿٤﴾ لَهُ مُلْكُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۖ وَإِلَى اللَّهِ
 تُرْجَعُ الْأُمُورُ ﴿٥﴾ يُوَلِّجُ اللَّيْلَ فِي النَّهَارِ وَيُوَلِّجُ النَّهَارَ فِي اللَّيْلِ ۖ
 وَهُوَ عَلِيمٌ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُورِ ﴿٦﴾

Allah's purity has been proclaimed by all that is in the heavens and the earth, and He is the Mighty, the Wise.

[1] To Him belongs the kingdom of the heavens and the earth. He gives life and brings death, and He is Powerful to do every thing. [2] He is the First and the Last, and the Manifest and the Hidden, and He is All-Knowing about every thing. [3] He is the One who created the heavens and the earth in six days, then He positioned

Himself on the Throne. He knows whatever goes into the earth and whatever comes out therefrom, and whatever descends from the sky, and whatever ascends thereto. And He is with you wherever you are, and Allah is watchful of whatever you do. [4] To Him belongs the kingdom of the heavens and the earth, and to Allah all matters are returned. [5] He makes the night enter into the day, and makes the day enter into the night, and He is All-Knowing about whatever lies in the hearts. [6]

Some of the Merits of Sūrah Al-Ḥadīd

It is recorded in Abū Dāwūd, Tirmidhī and Nasa'ī that Sayyidnā 'Irbād Ibn Sāriyah رضي الله عنه said that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ used to recite Al-Musabbihat before he went to sleep and said: "In them there is a verse that is more meritorious than a thousand verses." The collective name of the series Al-Musabbihāt refers to the following five Sūrahs: [1] Al-Ḥadīd; [2] Al-Ḥashr; [3] Aṣ-Ṣaff; [4] Jumu'ah; and [5] At-Taghābun. Having cited this Ḥadīth, Ibn Kathīr says that the best verse referred to in Sūrah Al-Ḥadīd is verse [3] **هُوَ الْأَوَّلُ وَالْآخِرُ وَالظَّاهِرُ وَالْبَاطِنُ ۚ وَهُوَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ** (He is the First and the Last, and the Manifest and the Hidden, and He is All-Knowing about every thing....57:3) Among the five Sūrahs, the first three, namely Al-Ḥadīd, Al-Ḥashr and Aṣ-Ṣaff commence with the past perfect tense '*sabbaha*' [purity has been proclaimed] whilst the last two, namely Al-Jumu'ah and Al-Taghābun commence with the imperfect tense *yusabbihu* [purity is proclaimed]. This implies that the purity of Allah should be declared at all times, the past, the present and the future. [Mazhari]

Remedy for Diabolical Whisperings

Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه said that if the Satan casts an evil scruple in anyone's heart, and thus causes skepticism about Allah and the religion of truth, he should softly recite the following verse [3]: **هُوَ الْأَوَّلُ وَالْآخِرُ وَالظَّاهِرُ وَالْبَاطِنُ ۚ وَهُوَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ** (He is the First and the Last, the Manifest and the Hidden and He is All-Knowing about every thing.)

What is meant by Allah's being First and Last, and Manifest and Hidden? There are more than ten different interpretations of these attributes, and they are not contradictory. The scope is wide enough to accommodate all interpretations. The meaning of the attribute *al-awwal* [the First] is more or less fixed, signifying that ontologically there was

nothing before Allah, and that He created everything and He is the First Cause of all existent things. The attribute *Al-'ākhīr* [the Last] means that He will exist even after everything will perish, as the following verse testifies: 'كُلُّ شَيْءٍ هَالِكٌ إِلَّا وَجْهَهُ' (Everything has to perish except His Countenance... [28:88]) It should be noted that death or perishing covers two possibilities, either actual death or potential death. Therefore the verse means that all existent creatures will either actually perish on the Day of Judgment, or they may not actually perish, but potentially they could perish. They have the inherent capacity for death and destruction. Thus despite their being existent they may still be described as *ḥālik* or *fānī* [perishing]. As for instance, Paradise and Hell, and the righteous or unrighteous inmates entering them will not actually perish, but potentially they have the inherent capacity to perish. Only the Supreme Being of Allah is such that neither non-existence has ever occurred to Him, nor can death overtake Him. Thus Allah is *Al-'Ākhīr* [the Last].

Imām Ghazālī رحمه الله تعالى has another explanation. He interprets the attribute 'Ākhīr [the Last] from the point of view of *ma'rīfah* [Knowledge] in the sense that knowing Allah Ta'ālā is the ultimate goal which man hopes to achieve. He moves in the direction of this goal, passing on the way through all the different stages and stations until he attains the Divine Knowledge. [Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī].

The attribute *Az-zāhīr* [the Manifest] signifies a Being whose manifestation is superior to everything. Since 'manifestation' is an offshoot of 'existence', and the Existence of Allah is First and superior to all existent entities, the Divine Manifestation surpasses the manifestation of all other beings. Nothing in this universe is more manifest than Him. The manifestation of His wisdom and His power is visible in every particle of this world.

The attribute *Al-bāṭin* [the Hidden] means that the accurate nature and essence of Allah's Being is hidden in the sense that the Divine Essence [*dhāt*] is beyond human perception. No intellect or thought can ever reach the accurate and Intrinsic Essence of Allah.

اے برتر از قیاس و گمان و خیال و وهم
وزهرچہ دیدہ ایم شنیدہ ایم وخواندہ ایم

He is far beyond any hypothesis, any guess, any, assumption,
any imagination,

And who is far beyond whatever we have ever seen, heard or read about.

اے برون از جملہ قال وقیل من
خاک بر فرق من و تمثیل من

He is beyond all our discussions and debates.

Whatever example I cite to explain Him is no more than a sheer failure.

...And He is with you wherever you are, ...57:4) No man is able to comprehend the essential nature of Allah's company or His being with us, though it is absolutely true that He is with us, because no man can exist or do any work without it. The Divine Will [*mashiyyah*] and power is necessary for everything. Therefore, Allah is with every human being in every situation, at every place. Allah knows best!

Verses 7 - 11

اٰمِنُوْا بِاللّٰهِ وَرَسُوْلِهِ وَاَنْفِقُوْا مِمَّا جَعَلَكُمْ مُّسْتَخْلَفِيْنَ فِيْهِ ۖ فَالَّذِيْنَ
اٰمِنُوْا مِنْكُمْ وَاَنْفَقُوْا لَهُمْ اَجْرٌ كَبِيْرٌ ﴿٧﴾ وَمَا لَكُمْ لَا تُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ
وَالرَّسُوْلِ يَدْعُوْكُمْ لِتُؤْمِنُوْا بِرَبِّكُمْ وَقَدْ اَخَذَ مِيْثَاقَكُمْ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ
مُّؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿٨﴾ هُوَ الَّذِيْ يُنَزِّلُ عَلٰى عَبْدِهٖ اٰيٰتٍ ۚ يَبَيِّنُ لِيْخْرِجَكُمْ مِّنَ
الظُّلُمٰتِ اِلَى النُّوْرِ ۚ وَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ بِكُمْ لَرْؤُوفٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿٩﴾ وَمَا لَكُمْ اَلَّا
تُنْفِقُوْا فِىْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ وَلِلّٰهِ مِيْرٰثُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ۖ لَا يَسْتَوِي
مِنْكُمْ مَّنْ اَنْفَقَ مِنْ قَبْلِ الْفَتْحِ وَقَاتَلَ ۚ اُولٰٓئِكَ اَعْظَمُ دَرَجَةً مِّنَ
الَّذِيْنَ اَنْفَقُوْا مِنْۢ بَعْدِ وَقَاتَلُوْا ۚ وَكُلًّا وَّعَدَ اللّٰهُ الْحُسْنٰى ۚ وَاللّٰهُ
بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ خَبِيْرٌ ﴿١٠﴾ مَنۢ ذَا الَّذِىْ يُقْرِضُ اللّٰهَ قَرْضًا حَسَنًا
فَيُضْعِفُهٗ لَهٗ وَلَهٗ اَجْرٌ كَرِيْمٌ ﴿١١﴾

Believe in Allah and His Messenger, and spend out of that (wealth) in which He has appointed you as

deputies.¹ So, for those of you who have believed and spent (in Allah's way), there is a big reward. [7] And what is wrong with you that you do not believe in Allah, while the Messenger invites you to believe in your Lord, and He has taken your covenant, if you are believers? [8] He is the One who reveals clear verses to His slave, so that He brings you out from layers of darkness towards the light. And to you, indeed, Allah is Very-Kind, Very-Merciful. [9] And what is wrong with you that you should not spend in the way of Allah, while to Allah belongs the inheritance of the heavens and the earth? Those who spent before the Conquest (of Makkah), and fought (in Allah's way), are not at par (with others). Those are much greater in rank than those who spent later and fought, though Allah has promised the good (reward) for each. And Allah is well aware of what you do. [10] Who is the one who advances a loan, a good loan, to Allah so that He multiplies it for him, and he may have a noble reward? [11]

Ordering Faith

وَقَدْ أَخَذَ مِيثَاقَكُمْ (...and He has taken your covenant57:8) This could refer to the covenant taken in 'azal' (pre-eternity). According to verses 172-174 of Sūrah Al-A'raf, Allah gathered all the souls even before they took the form of their existence, and took the covenant of 'alast' [the pre-eternal covenant]. He asked them: أَلَسْتُ بِرَبِّكُمْ ("Am I not your Lord?")

[1] The original word used in the text is '*mustakhlaḥfin*' which has two meanings: 'deputies' and 'successors'. Taken in the first meaning, the verse indicates that the wealth held by human beings originally belongs to Allah, but He has made them His deputies or representatives to use it according to His directions. Although He has allowed them to use it for their own benefit, it should always be subject to the rules prescribed by Him in Shari'ah. Once it is believed that one is not the absolute owner of this wealth, it should not be difficult for him to spend according to the command of its absolute Owner. This is the interpretation of the verse according to the majority of commentators. However, some other exegetes have taken the word '*mustakhlaḥfin*' in the sense of 'successors'. In this case the verse reminds us that whatever wealth we have in our hands today has reached us from other people who owned it before us. We have succeeded them in its ownership, and ultimately it will be passed on to some others through any mode of transfer including inheritance. All kinds of wealth are thus in transit, moving from one person to another. Therefore, one should not hesitate in spending it in Allah's way, because it has to be passed on to some others in any case. (Muhammad Taqi Usmani)

They replied: بلى (Of course You are, we affirm). Another possibility is that this covenant could refer to the pledge taken from the previous prophets and their followers to believe in the final Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ and support him. This covenant is mentioned by the Holy Qur'ān in the following words:

ثُمَّ جَاءَكُمْ رَسُولٌ مُّصَدِّقٌ لِّمَا مَعَكُمْ لَتُؤْمِنُنَّ بِهِ وَلَتَنْصُرُنَّهُ، قَالَ أَأَقْرَرْتُمْ وَأَخَذْتُمْ عَلَىٰ ذَٰلِكُمْ إِصْرِي قَالُوا أَقْرَرْنَا قَالَ فَاشْهَدُوا وَأَنَا مَعَكُمْ مِنَ الشَّاهِدِينَ.

"...then comes to you a messenger verifying what is with you; you shall have to believe in him and you shall have to support him. He said: 'Do you affirm and accept my covenant in this respect?' They said: 'We affirm.' He said: 'Then, bear witness, and I am with you among the witnesses.'" (3:81)

إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُّؤْمِنِينَ (...if you are believers - 57:8). A question may arise here: In the earlier part of this very verse [8], the infidels and idolaters were reprimanded in the following words, "And what is wrong with you that you do not believe in Allah" This goes to show that the addressees of this phrase are 'non-believers', then how is it appropriate to say 'if you are believers'?

The answer to this question is that the unbelievers did not deny the existence of the Creator. In point of fact, they claimed to believe in God, and thus they used to say مَا نَعْبُدُهُمْ إِلَّا لِيُقَرِّبُونَا إِلَى اللَّهِ زُلْفَى (We only worship them [the idols] that they may bring us nearer to Allah in position....39:3) In this context, the concluding phrase of verse [8] implies that 'If your claim [that you believe in God] is true, then go about the perfect and right way in "believing in God" which is not only to believe in God but also to believe in His Messenger.

وَلِلَّهِ مِيرَاثُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ (...while to Allah belongs the inheritance of the heavens and the earth?....57:10) The word *mīrāth* [inheritance, heritage] is the process by which the assets of a deceased person pass to the living heirs and beneficiaries. This transfer of ownership takes place automatically by virtue of the law of Shari'ah; the deceased has no choice in the matter. On this occasion, Allah has described the ownership of heaven and earth by the expression *mīrāth* [inheritance, heritage] presumably because all those assets deemed to be owned by men will ultimately return to Allah, no matter whether men like it or not. Although

the Real Owner and Master of the heavens and the earth is Allah, He transferred part-ownership of things to man by His grace, but on the Day of Judgment, even this outward and partial ownership will no longer remain in the hands of anyone. At that stage, all sorts of ownership, apparent and real, outward and inward, will belong to none but Allah. Therefore, if those who are apparently owners of some wealth today spend it in Allah's way, they will receive its compensation in the Hereafter, and thus anything spent in the way of Allah will become the eternal property of the spender.

It is recorded in Tirmidhī on the authority of Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضي الله عنها that one day a goat was slaughtered. Most of it was distributed among other people, except for a foreleg. The Holy Prophet ﷺ wanted to know from her whether any part of it was spared from distribution. She said 'yes, a foreleg'. The Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "The entire goat is spared, except this foreleg." He meant that the entire goat was spent in the way of Allah and thus it was spared for their benefit in the Hereafter, because it would remain with Allah for compensation. On the contrary, there would be no compensation for the foreleg that had been kept for later use, because that would perish here. [Mazharī]

لَا يَسْتَوِي مِنْكُمْ مَنْ آمَنَ مِنْ قَبْلِ الْفَتْحِ وَقَاتَلَ (...Those who spent before the Conquest [of Makkah], and fought [in Allah's way], are not at par [with others]. ...10) It means that there are two types of people who spend wealth in the way of Allah: [1] those who embraced Islam before the victory of Makkah and, being believers, spent their wealth in the cause of Allah; [2] those who participated in *jihād* after the conquest of Makkah and spent their wealth in Allah's way. The two types are not equal in the sight of Allah. They differ in status and reward. The first category is described as higher in status and reward than the second category who will receive reward commensurate with their status.

Conquest of Makkah: The Dividing Line in Determining the Status of the noble Companions ﷺ

The verse declares the Conquest of Makkah as the dividing line in determining the status of the two categories of the noble Companions, presumably because the political conditions of Makkah before the Conquest were very bleak and difficult for Muslims. In terms of extrinsic causes, the survival of Muslims was threatened and their progress was

doubted. The people at large could not rule out the possibility that, like other movements, Islam would soon erode and suffer a natural attrition or death. Wise men of the world would not join a movement where there was a fear of defeat or annihilation. They wait for results. When the movement shows signs of success, they join it. Some people, though think that it is the truth, do not pluck courage to join it for fear of persecution and on account of their own weaknesses. But when the courageous and determined people are convinced about the veracity of a theory or belief system, they accept it instantly. They do not bother about victory or defeat, and smaller or larger membership of the movement does not concern them.

The people, who embraced Islam before conquest of Makkah, were witnessing the small number and political weakness of the Muslims and the consequent hardships. Muslims were very small in number and they were weak, on account of which the pagans persecuted them. Especially in the early days of Islam, disclosing one's faith in Islam would amount to losing his life, hearth and home. It is obvious that those who put their lives at stake by embracing Islam in such circumstances, and offered their lives and wealth for the help of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and for the service of Islam had such a high level of sincerity in their faith and practice that no other people can be compared to them.

Gradually, conditions changed. Muslims grew in power, so much so that eventually Makkah was conquered, after which Islam spread tremendously throughout the Arab world, people embraced the religion of Allah en masse [as the Qur'ān says: يَدْخُلُونَ فِي دِينِ اللَّهِ أَفْوَاجًا (...people entering Allah's [approved] religion in multitudes) [110:2] This happened because many people were convinced of the veracity of Islam, but reluctant to embrace it publicly on account of their own weaknesses, owing to the might and power of the opposition and for fear of their persecution. These hurdles were now out of their way, and they started entering the fold of Islam in multitudes.

Although such people too are shown respect and honour by this verse, and forgiveness and mercy is promised to them, it has been made clear that their status cannot be equal to those who, due to their unshaken faith and resolute courage, declared their Islam despite all apprehensions of extreme hardships and persecution, and offered themselves to Islam in

very difficult times.

Allah promises Paradise and Forgiveness to all Noble Ṣaḥābah ﷺ

In the current set of verses, a distinction is drawn between the different categories of the noble Ṣaḥābah (Companions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, but towards the end of verse 10 it is declared that **كُلًّا وَعَدَ اللَّهُ** (...though Allah has promised the good [reward] for each ...57:10). The word *ḥusnā* [good reward] means that the promise of Paradise and forgiveness extends to all the noble Companions, whether they spent and fought before or after the Conquest. This includes almost the entire concourse of Companions, because it is hardly conceivable that, despite being Muslims, some of them might have not spent anything in Allah's way or not participated against the hostile foes of Islam. Thus the Qur'ānic proclamation of Paradise and forgiveness is for the general body of Companions.

Ibn Ḥazm رحمه الله تعالى says that the meaning of verse [10] becomes even clearer when we append to it verses [101-102] of Sūrah Al-Anbiyā': **إِنَّ الَّذِينَ سَبَقَتْ لَهُمْ مِنَّا الْحُسْنَىٰ أُولَٰئِكَ عَنْهَا مُبْعَدُونَ. لَا يَسْمَعُونَ حَسِيسَهَا وَهُمْ فِي مَا اشْتَهَتْ أَنفُسُهُمْ خَالِدُونَ** (Surely, those for whom the good (news) from Us has come earlier shall be kept far away from it (i.e. from the Hell). They will not hear the slightest of its sound, and they will remain forever in what their selves desire.) [21:101-102].

The verses under comment contain the phrase **كُلًّا وَعَدَ اللَّهُ الْحُسْنَىٰ** (...though Allah has promised the good (reward) for each ...[57:10] In verses [21:101-102], Allah Ta'ālā proclaims that those who have received the good news of reward [*al-ḥusnā*] will be kept far away from Hell. The Qur'ān thus guarantees that all the Companions, whether from the first category or from the second one, are immune from Hell. Even if someone from them would commit a sin, he will not persist in it, but he will either repent from it, or will be forgiven for it because of the blessed company of the Holy Prophet ﷺ he enjoyed, his help offered to him, the good deeds he performed and many services he rendered to Islam. Therefore, he would not leave this world unless his sins would be forgiven and his account of deeds would have been clear. It is also possible that worldly calamities would serve as an expiation to wipe out his shortcomings or painful experience in the grave or '*Ālam-ul-barzakh* will expiate his

faults.

There are Traditions that report torment for some of the noble Companions, but that does not refer to the torture of the Hereafter or punishment of the Hell. It refers to the chastisement of the grave or *'Alam-ul-barzakh*. It would not be far-fetched to assume that if a Companion committed a sin and did not find an opportunity to repent and cleanse himself, he would be purified by infliction of the grave, so that no chastisement will be inflicted on him in the Hereafter.

The Status of the Noble Ṣaḥābah in the light of Qur'ān and Sunnah, not in terms of Historical Narratives

The Noble Ṣaḥābah are not like the general body of the Muslim Community. They are a medium between the Holy Prophet ﷺ and the general body of the Muslim Community. Without them neither the Qur'ān nor its meaning or the teachings of the Holy Prophet ﷺ can reach the Ummah. Therefore, they enjoy a special status in Islam. The status of the blessed Companions cannot be recognized by the historical narrations that are a mixture of right and wrong. It is rather recognized in the light of Qur'ān and Sunnah.

If any of them slips up, in most cases it would not exceed a *khaṭa'* *ijtihādī* or error in judgement, not a sin or willful transgression of law. In fact, according to the clear text of a Prophetic Tradition, if a *mujtahid* were to slip up or err in his judgement, he still receives one reward. Even if they committed a sin, it would be counted as nil in view of their life-long righteous deeds, and supporting the Holy Prophet ﷺ and Islam. The reverence and awe of Allah was engrossed in their hearts to such a high degree that they would shudder at the very thought of ordinary sins and would repent forthwith. As a result, they would inflict punishment on themselves. Some would tie themselves to the column of the mosque, and as long as they are not certain that their sins would be forgiven they would remain tied.

In addition, each one of them performed so many righteous deeds that they could expiate for their sins. Moreover, Allah has announced a general amnesty for their sins in this and other verses. He not only pardoned their sins, but also proclaimed رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ وَرَضُوا عَنْهُ (Allah is well-pleased with them, and they are well-pleased with Him. 98:8). It is

absolutely forbidden to speak ill of them or taunt them or revile them because of their mutual differences and disagreements. According to a Prophetic Tradition, doing so is incurring Allah's curse and putting one's own faith in jeopardy.

Nowadays, on the basis of false and weak historical narratives some writers have made the noble and blessed Companions the target of taunts and reproach. First of all, the basis on which the historical narratives are founded are unreliable and questionable. Even if it is taken for granted that they have some historical substance, they are clearly in conflict with Qur'ān and Sunnah. Hence, they must be refuted in the strongest terms possible. The original statement stands: The noble and blessed Companions are forgiven and pardoned.

Unanimous Belief of the Ummah regarding the Noble Ṣaḥābah

It is obligatory on Muslims to show respect and honour to all the Companions, to love them and praise them. It is likewise imperative to observe silence regarding their mutual differences and disagreements. It is compulsory to abstain from making any of them the target of accusations and reproach. All texts of Islamic beliefs make plain this consensual belief of the Ummah. Imām Aḥmad رحمه الله تعالى has written a monograph on the subject which reached us on the authority of Iṣṭakhrī. A section of it partly reads:

لَا يُجُوزُ لِأَحَدٍ أَنْ يَذْكُرَ شَيْئًا مِّنْ مَّسَاوِيهِمْ وَلَا يَطْعُنَ عَلَى أَحَدٍ مِّنْهُمْ بِعَيْبٍ وَلَا
نَقْصٍ فَمَنْ فَعَلَ ذَلِكَ وَجَبَ تَأْذِيْبُهُ.

"It is not lawful for anyone to speak ill of the Companions, or cast aspersions against them, or find fault with them. Whoever does so should be punished." [Sharḥ-ul-'Aqīdah Al-Wasīṭiyyah, known as Ad-Durrah Al-Mudī'ah]

Ibn Taimiyyah in his As-Ṣārim-ul-Maslūl has cited many verses of the Qur'ān and Prophetic Traditions regarding the virtues and characteristics of the noble Companions, after which he concludes:

وَهَذَا مِمَّا لَا نَعْلَمُ فِيهِ خِلَافًا بَيْنَ أَهْلِ الْفَقْهِ وَالْعِلْمِ مِنْ أَصْحَابِ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ
عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ وَالتَّابِعِينَ لَهُمْ بِإِحْسَانٍ وَسَائِرِ أَهْلِ السُّنَّةِ وَالْجَمَاعَةِ فَإِنَّهُمْ مُجْمَعُونَ
عَلَى أَنَّ الْوَاجِبَ الثَّنَاءُ عَلَيْهِمْ وَالْإِسْتِغْفَارُ لَهُمْ وَالتَّرَحُّمُ عَلَيْهِمْ وَالتَّرَضُّي عَنْهُمْ
وَالْعِتْقَادُ مَحَبَّتِهِمْ وَمَوَالَاتِهِمْ وَعَقُوبَةُ مَنْ أَسَاءَ فِيهِمْ الْقَوْلُ.

"As far as we know, there is no difference of opinion in this issue among the scholars and the jurists from Companions and their followers, and the Ahl-us-sunnah wal-jama'ah. There is consensus of the Ummah that it is imperative to praise the Companions, to seek forgiveness for them, to remember them with compassion and pleasure, and to express love and friendship for them. Anyone who dishonours them should be punished."

Ibn Taimiyyah confirms, in Sharḥ-ul-'Aqīdah Al-Wāsiṭiyyah, the consensual belief of the *Ahl-us-sunnah wal-jama'ah* of the entire Ummah of the Holy Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ relating to the mutual disagreement of the Companions:

وَيُمْسِكُونَ عَمَّا شَجَرَ بَيْنَ الصَّحَابَةِ وَيَقُولُونَ هَذِهِ الْأَثَارُ الْمَرْوِيَّةُ فِي مَسَاوِيهِمْ مِنْهَا مَا هُوَ كَذِبٌ وَمِنْهَا مَا يَزِيدُ فِيهَا وَنَقِصَ وَغَيْرَ وَجْهِهِ، وَالصَّحِيحُ مِنْهُ هُمْ فِيهِ مَعْدُورُونَ إِمَّا مُجْتَهِدُونَ مُصِيبُونَ وَإِمَّا مُجْتَهِدُونَ مُخْطِئُونَ، وَهُمْ مَعَ ذَلِكَ لَا يَعْتَقِدُونَ أَنَّ كُلَّ وَاحِدٍ مِنَ الصَّحَابَةِ مَعْصُومٌ مِنْ كِبَائِرِ الْإِثْمِ وَصَغَائِرِهِ بَلْ يَجُوزُ عَلَيْهِمُ الذُّنُوبُ فِي الْجُمْلَةِ وَلَهُمْ مِنَ الْفَضَائِلِ وَالسَّوَابِقِ مَا يُوجِبُ مَغْفِرَةً مَا يَصْدُرُ مِنْهُمْ حَتَّى أَنْتَهُمْ يُغْفَرُ لَهُمْ مِنَ السَّيِّئَاتِ مَا لَا يُغْفَرُ لِمَنْ بَعْدَهُمْ.

"*Ahl-us-sunnah wal-jama'ah* observe silence relating to matters in which the noble Companions mutually disagreed. According to them, the position of the narratives that find fault with them may be summarized as follows: Some of them are absolutely false whilst others have been distorted or perverted. Reports that are authentic have a plausible explanation, (because they did what they did on the basis of '*ijtihad*' which Shari'ah recognizes). If they reached the right conclusion (by exercising reasoning), they would be rewarded doubly; and if they arrived at an incorrect conclusion (by exerting effort to derive the law on an issue by expending all the available means of interpreting at the jurist's disposal and by taking into account all the legal evidences related to the issue,) they are still excused (and deserve a single reward). Despite this situation, the Ummah does not believe that every Companion is innocent, infallible or sinless. In fact, it is possible for them to commit sins - major or minor, but their virtues and great services to Islam are such that they demand forgiveness. The scope of their forgiveness and pardon would be so wide that the later members of the Ummah would not have such a wide scope."

A detailed account of the status of the sahabah is given in Sūrah Al-Fath under verse [29]. I have written a book entitled *maqām-e-ṣaḥābah*

in which I have collected relevant Qur'ānic verses and Prophetic Traditions pertaining to the status of the Companions. This book has already been published. The Ummah is unanimous on the point that all the blessed Companions are impartial, unbiased, reliable and worthy of confidence. The book deals elaborately with their disagreements and the civil wars that took place among them. It deals with the status of the historical narratives and their true place in critical study. Some of these issues to the degree necessary have been included in the commentary of Sūrah Muḥammad and Sūrah Al-Fath. Please refer to the relevant sections there. Allah's help is sought and on Him is our reliance!

Verses 12 - 19

يَوْمَ تَرَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ يَسْعَى نُورُهُمْ بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَ
بِأَيْمَانِهِمْ بُشْرَانِ الْيَوْمِ جَنَّتْ تَجْرَى مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ
فِيهَا ۚ ذَٰلِكَ هُوَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ ﴿١٢﴾ يَوْمَ يَقُولُ الْمُنْفِقُونَ وَالْمُنْفِقَاتُ
لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا انظُرُونَا نَقْتِسِبْ مِنْ نُورِكُمْ ۚ قِيلَ ارْجِعُوا وَرَاءَكُمْ
فَالْتِمِسُوا نُورًا ۚ فَضُرِبَ بَيْنَهُم بِسُورٍ لَهُ بَابٌ ۚ بَاطِنُهُ فِيهِ الرَّحْمَةُ
وَزَاهِرُهُ مِنْ قِبَلِهِ الْعَذَابُ ﴿١٣﴾ يُنَادُونَهُمْ أَلَمْ نَكُنْ مَعَكُمْ ۚ قَالُوا
بَلَىٰ وَلَكِنَّكُمْ فَتَنْتُمْ أَنْفُسَكُمْ وَتَرَبَّصْتُمْ وَارْتَبْتُمْ وَغَرَّتْكُمُ الْأَمَانِيُّ
حَتَّىٰ جَاءَ أَمْرُ اللَّهِ وَغَرَّكُمْ بِاللَّهِ الْغُرُورُ ﴿١٤﴾ فَالْيَوْمَ لَا يُؤْخَذُ
مِنْكُمْ فِدْيَةٌ وَلَا مِنَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا ۚ مَأْوٰكُمُ النَّارُ ۚ هِيَ مَوْلٰكُمُ ۚ
وَبِئْسَ الْمَصِيرُ ﴿١٥﴾ أَلَمْ يَأْنِ لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَنْ تَخْشَعَ قُلُوبُهُمْ
لِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ وَمَا نَزَلَ مِنَ الْحَقِّ ۚ وَلَا يَكُونُوا كَالَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ
مِنْ قَبْلُ فَطَالَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْأَمَدُ فَقَسَتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ ۚ وَكَثِيرٌ مِّنْهُمْ فَسِقُونَ
﴿١٦﴾ اَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ يُحْيِي الْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا ۚ قَدْ بَيَّنَّا لَكُمُ الْآيَاتِ
لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ ﴿١٧﴾ إِنَّ الْمُصَدِّقِينَ وَالْمُصَدِّقَاتِ وَأَقْرَضُوا اللَّهَ

قَرَضًا حَسَنًا يُضَعَفُ لَهُمْ وَلَهُمْ أَجْرٌ كَرِيمٌ ﴿١٨﴾ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِاللَّهِ
 وَرُسُلِهِ أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الصَّادِقُونَ ۖ وَالشَّهَدَاءُ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ ۖ لَهُمْ
 أَجْرُهُمْ وَنُورُهُمْ ۖ وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَكَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا أُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ
 الْجَحِيمِ ﴿١٩﴾

On the Day when you will see the believing men and the believing women, their light proceeding in front of them and to their right hands, (it will be said to them,) "Good news for you today! Gardens beneath which rivers flow, to live therein for ever! That is the great achievement, [12] the Day when the hypocrite men and hypocrite women will say to those who believe, "Wait for us, so that we may have a share from your light.", it will be said (to them), "Go back to your rear, and search for light." Then a wall will be placed between them, which will have a gate. In its inner side, there will be the divine mercy, while towards its outer side, there will be the divine punishment. [13] They (the hypocrites) will call out to them (the believers), "Were we not with you?" They will say, "Yes, (you were,) but you led your souls to a wrong way, and kept waiting (for an evil end to the Muslims), and remained in doubt, and were deluded by fancies, until Allah's command came to pass, and you were deceived about Allah by the Big Deceiver (Iblīs). [14] So, no ransom will be accepted from you today, nor from those who disbelieved (openly). Your abode is the Fire, and it is an evil end." [15] Has the time not yet come for those who believe that their hearts should be humble for the remembrance of Allah and for the truth that has descended (through revelation)? And they must not be like those to whom the Book was given before, but a long period passed on them (in which they did not repent), therefore their hearts became hard, while many of them were sinners. [16] Know well that Allah revives the land after its death. We have made the signs clear for you, so that you may understand. [17] Surely those men who give *ṣadaqah* (charity) and those women who give *ṣadaqah* and have advanced a good loan to Allah, for them it will be multiplied, and for them there is a noble reward. [18] And those who believed in Allah and His Messengers, it is they who are the *ṣiddīqs* (the most righteous after prophets) and the *shuhadā'*

(martyrs) in the sight of your Lord. For them shall be their reward and their light. And those who disbelieved and rejected Our verses – those are the people of the Hell. [19]

The Believers will be awarded Light on the Day of Resurrection

يَوْمَ تَرَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ يَسْعَى نُورُهُمْ بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَبِأَيْمَانِهِمْ (On the Day when you will see the believing men and the believing women, their light proceeding in front of them and to their right hands,....57:12) 'The day' refers to the 'Day of Resurrection'. The fact of 'light running before them' will take place just prior to people's passing over the bridge of *sirat*. The details are given in a Tradition reported by Sayyidnā Abū Umāmah Bāhili̇. Ibn Kathīr has cited it on the authority of Ibn Abī Ḥātim. The Tradition is lengthy. It recounts that Sayyidnā Abū Umāmah Bāhili̇ attended a funeral in Damascus. When it was over, he reminded people about death, the grave, the Resurrection and the Hereafter. A few of the statements are reproduced below in translation:

"Then you will be transferred from the graves to the plane of gathering where there will be different stages and spots to stand or wait. Then there will come a stage when some faces will brighten up and others will be darkened by the Divine command. Then there will come a stage when people - believers and non-believers - all will assemble on the Plane of Gathering. An intense darkness will prevail and nobody will be able to see anything. Thereafter light will be distributed. (Another report of Ibn Abī Ḥātim, reported by Ibn Kathīr, which he narrates on the authority of Sayyidnā 'Abdullah Ibn Mas'ūd says that each believer will receive the light commensurate with his deeds; some will have light as large as a mountain, some as a date tree, some as big as the height of a man. The least among them will have a light as big as his index finger; it will lit at times and extinguished at other times.) Sayyidnā Abū Umāmah Bāhili̇ then went on to say that the hypocrites and the infidels would not receive any light. The Holy Qur'ān exemplifies it thus:

أَوْ كَظُلُمَاتٍ فِي بَحْرٍ لُجِّيٍّ يَغْشَاهُ مَوْجٌ مِّنْ فَوْقِهِ مَوْجٌ مِّنْ فَوْقِهِ ظُلُمَاتٌ لِّأَعْيُنٍ مُّصْبَاةٍ فَمِمَّا لَدُنْكَ يُخْرِجُ يَدَّهُ لَمْ يَكُنْ يُرَىٰ بِهَا وَفِيهَا لَمْ يَجْعَلِ اللَّهُ لَهُ نُورًا فَمَا لَهُ مِن نُّورٍ

'or their deeds are like layers of darkness in a vast deep sea overwhelmed by a wave, above which there is another wave—layers of darkness, one above the other. When one puts forth his hand, he can hardly see it. And the one to whom Allah does not give light can have no light at all.' (24:40)

From this narration, it is learnt that the infidels and the hypocrites

will be deprived of the light from the very beginning point where Allah will distribute light to the believing men and women after the intensely dark spot. But Ṭabrānī reports a Tradition on the authority of Sayyidnā Ibn ‘Abbās رضي الله عنه that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

"Allah will send light to every believer at the bridge, and also to every hypocrite, but when the hypocrites reach the bridge, their light will be snatched away." (Ibn Kathīr)

This shows that the hypocrites will initially receive light, but when they reach the bridge, they will be deprived of it. Be that as it may, whether they will be deprived of light initially or it will be extinguished later on after receiving it at an earlier stage, they will plead to the believers: 'Please wait for us! Let us take advantage of your light, because we were with you in the world when we performed *ṣalāh*, paid *zakāh*, performed *Ḥajj* and even participated in *jihād* expeditions?' The request will be declined. The rejoinder to this plea is forthcoming in full details. It is in keeping with the characteristic of the hypocrites that they should first be shown the light, then it should be extinguished to leave them in total darkness, just as they behaved deceitfully in the world, as the Qur‘ān states:

يُخٰدِعُوْنَ اللّٰهَ وَهُوَ خٰدِعُهُمْ

Surely, the hypocrites [try to] deceive Allah while He is the One who leaves them in deception ... [4:142]

Imām Baghawī says that 'deception' here means that first the light will be sent to them, but it will be snatched away from them just in the nick of time when they will be needing it most crucially. At that crucial moment, the believers too will fear lest their light should be snatched away. As a result, they would implore thus:

يَوْمَ لَا يَخْزِي اللّٰهَ النَّبِيَّ وَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا مَعَهٗ نُورُهُمْ يَسْعٰى بَيْنَ اَيْدِيْهِمْ وَبِاَيْمَانِهِمْ يَقُوْلُوْنَ رَبَّنَا اٰتِنْمْ لَنَا نُوْرَنَا، وَاغْفِرْ لَنَا اِنَّكَ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيْرٌ .

"...on the Day when Allah will not disgrace the Prophet and those who believed with him. Their light will run before them and to their right hands. They will say, "Our Lord, perfect for us our light, and forgive us. Indeed you are powerful over every thing." [66:8] (Mazhari)

Muslim, Aḥmad and Darquṭnī record on the authority of Sayyidnā Jabir Ibn ‘Abdullah the Prophetic Ḥadīth that at first, light will be given

to both believers and hypocrites, but when the latter would reach the bridge, it will be snatched away from the hypocrites.

Mazḥarī reconciles the two versions thus: There are two types of hypocrites, one of whom appeared in the time of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. This type will be treated like the infidels. The non-believers will not receive light from the very outset. Likewise, the hypocrites of the time of the Holy Prophet ﷺ will be deprived of the light from the very outset. The second type of hypocrites appeared after the time of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, but they cannot be so called in the true sense of the word because revelation ended with the departure of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and without definitive evidence on the basis of revelation no one can be labeled, identified or classified as a *munāfiq* [hypocrite]. The *munāfiq* manifests the form of a man of faith in his outward practice, but his inner dimension is completely devoid of faith and belief. There is no way of knowing this for common people. However, Allah is fully aware of his inner and outer dimensions. He will treat each one accordingly. The *munāfiqs* will be shown the light in the beginning, but when they would arrive at the bridge, their light will be put out and they will be groping in total darkness.

In this category of *munāfiqs* fall those people of this Ummah who distort the Qur'an and Ḥadīth twisting their meanings to suit their own purposes. We seek Allah's refuge from it.

Causes of Light and Darkness on the Plane of Gathering

Tafsīr Mazḥarī, on this occasion, has, on the basis of Qur'an and Ḥadīth, described the causes of light and darkness on the Plane of Gathering. Below, we reproduce those causes the knowledge of which is more important than pure academic research, in the hope that Allah will grant us light:

[1] The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "Give glad tidings to those who go to the mosque in the darkness of night that they will receive perfect light on the Day of Judgment." (Reported by Abū Dāwūd and Tirmidhī from Buraidah ؓ, and Ibn Mājah from Anas ؓ. This Ḥadīth is also reported by Sahl Ibn Sa'd, Zaid Ibn Harithah, Ibn 'Abbās, Ibn 'Umar, Harithah Ibn Wahb, Abū 'Umamah, Abu-ad-Darda', Abū Mūsā, Abū Hurairah, 'Ā'ishah رضي الله عنهم اجمعين)

[2] The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

مَنْ حَافَظَ عَلَى الصَّلَوَاتِ كَانَتْ لَهُ نُورًا وَبُرْهَانًا وَنَجَاةٌ يَوْمَ الْقِيَمَةِ وَمَنْ لَمْ يُحَافِظْ عَلَيْهَا لَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ نُورًا وَلَا بُرْهَانًا وَلَا نَجَاةٌ وَكَانَ يَوْمَ الْقِيَمَةِ مَعَ قَارُونَ وَهَامَانَ وَفِرْعَوْنَ.

"He who takes care of his five daily prayers [that is, performs them regularly fulfilling all their essentials], it will serve as light, proof and salvation for him on the Day of Judgement. He who fails to take care of it, there will be no light, nor proof or salvation for him on the Day of Judgement. The latter will be in the company of Qārūn, Hāmān and Fir'aun."

(Reported by Aḥmad and Ṭabarānī from Ibn 'Umar ؓ)

[3] The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "Whoever recites Sūrah Al-Kahf, there will be so much of light for him on the Day of Judgement that it will spread from his place to Makkah." In another narration, "Whoever recites Sūrah Al-Kahf on a Friday, light will extend from his feet to the heights of the heaven on the Day of Judgment." (Reported by Ṭabarānī from Abū Sa'īd ؓ)

[4] The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "Whoever recites just a single verse of the Qur'ān, it will be a light for him on the Day of Judgement." (Reported by Aḥmad from Abū Hurairah ؓ)

[5] The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "Whoever sends *ṣalāh* (*durūd*) to me, it shall be the cause of light on the Bridge of Ṣirāt." (Reported by Dailamī from Abū Hurairah ؓ)

[6] The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said when detailing the rules of Ḥajj: "The hair, that falls on the ground at the time of shaving it when coming out of the state of *iḥrām*, will be a light for him on the Day of Judgement" (Ṭabarānī from 'Ubādah Ibn samit ؓ)

[7] The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "Stoning the *jamarāt* in Minā will be a light on the Day of Judgement." (Musnad of Bazzār from Ibn Mas'ūd ؓ)

[8] The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "He whose hair turns gray in Islam, it will be a light for him on the Day of Judgement." (Ṭabarānī, with a good chain, from Abū Hurairah ؓ)

[9] The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "He who shoots even one arrow in

Allah's way while fighting in *jihād*, it will be a light for him on the Day of Judgement." (Bazzār with a good chain from Abū Hurairah ؓ)

[10] The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "He who remembers Allah in the marketplace will receive light for every strand of hair on the Day of Judgement." (Baihaqī in Shu'ab-ul-Īmān with an interrupted chain from Ibn 'Umar ؓ)

[11] The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "He who alleviates the calamity of a Muslim, Allah will create two compartments of light for him at the bridge which will brighten up a whole world. No one besides Allah knows its number." (Ṭabarānī from Abū Hurairah ؓ)

[12] The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: *هُوَ الظُّلُمْتُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَمَةِ* "Beware of *ẓulm* [injustice] because that will yield *ẓulumāt* [layers of darkness] on the Day of Judgement." (Bukhārī and Muslim from Ibn 'Umar ؓ, Muslim from Jābir ؓ and Ḥakim from Abū Hurairah ؓ and Ibn 'Umar, and Ṭabarānī from Ibn Ziyad ؓ).

يَوْمَ يَقُولُ الْمُنْفِقُونَ وَالْمُنْفِقَاتُ لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا انظُرُونَا نَقْتَسِمِ مِنْ نُورِكُمْ (...the Day when the hypocrite men and hypocrite women will say to those who believe, "Wait for us, so that we may have a share from your light...(57:13) The meaning is self-evident.

قِيلَ ارْجِعُوا وَرَاءَكُمْ فَالْتَمِسُوا نُورًا (...it will be said [to them], "Go back to your rear, and search for light57:13) This reply will be given by either the believers, or by the angels. [Ibn 'Abbās and Qatādah]

فَضْرَبَ بَيْنَهُمْ بِسُورَةٍ بَابٌ ط *بَاطِنُهُ فِيهِ الرَّحْمَةُ وَظَاهِرُهُ مِنْ قِبَلِهِ الْعَذَابُ* (...Then a wall will be placed between them, which will have a gate. In its inner side, there will be the Divine mercy, while towards its outer side, there will be the Divine punishment...57:13). Having received the reply from either the believers or the angels, the hypocrites will return to the place where the light was distributed. They will find nothing there, so they will attempt to go back to the believers but in the meantime a wall will be set up between the hypocrites and the believers. As a result, the hypocrites will be separated from the believers and will not be able to reach them. They will be left in complete darkness. On the side of the believers there will be Allah's mercy while on the side of the hypocrites there will be chastisement.

Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī cites Ibn Zaid's view that this wall refers to A'rāf,

which will be a barrier between the believers and the hypocrites. Other commentators express the view that the wall is not the barrier of A'raf, but it is some other wall or barrier. The door in the wall could serve one of two purposes: [1] It will be a way through which the believers and the hypocrites will communicate with one another; or [2] all the believers will pass through this door and then sealed off permanently.

Special Note

In the matter of light, the infidels are not mentioned anywhere, because in their case there is no question of having such a light. The hypocrites are, however, mentioned and there are two narrations concerning them: [1] That they will not receive light at all from the outset; or [2] They will receive it at first, but when they arrive at the Bridge of *Ṣirāt*, it will be extinguished. A wall will be erected as a barrier between them and the believers. This goes to show that only the believers will cross the Bridge of *Ṣirāt* from above the Hell. The infidels and pagans will not pass through the Bridge. They will be pushed into the Fire direct through the doors of Hell. The sinful believers, who will be kept in the Hell for a while to be cleansed of their sins, will fall into the Hell while crossing the Bridge. The rest of the believers will cross the bridge safely and enter Paradise, as explicitly stated by Shah 'Abdul-Qādir Dehlawī رحمه الله تعالى and supported by Durr. Allah knows best!

أَلَمْ يَأْنِ لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَنْ تَخْشَعَ قُلُوبُهُمْ لِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ وَمَا نَزَلَ مِنَ الْحَقِّ (Has the time not yet come for those who believe that their hearts should be humble for the remembrance of Allah and for the truth that has descended [through revelation]?...57:16) The phrase *khushū'-ul-qalb* means 'for the heart to soften; to be receptive to advice; to be obedient; to submit'. [Ibn Kathīr] In the Qur'ānic context, it implies 'a complete willingness to yield to the Divine injunctions, or the Divine imperatives and prohibitions without allowing any laxity in following them. [Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī]

This verse admonishes the believers. Sayyidnā 'Abdullah Ibn 'Abbās ؓ reports that some of the believers were found to be lacking in firmness, and somewhat laziness was felt in their practices. So this verse was revealed. Imām A'mash رحمه الله تعالى said: After settling down in Madīnah, the blessed Companions experienced socio-economic comfort and prosperity; as a result some of them relaxed in exerting their efforts to do good works as they used to do previously. Thus this verse was revealed.

[Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī]

Sayyidnā 'Abdullah Ibn 'Abbās ؓ's narration also carries the additional information that this admonitory verse was revealed thirteen years after the revelation had started. [Recorded by Ibn Abī Ḥatīm] Sayyidnā 'Abdullah Ibn Mas'ūd ؓ narrates that this admonitory verse was revealed four years after they had embraced Islam to administer this mild reproof. Allah knows best!

In any case, the Muslims are cautioned in this verse that they should prepare themselves to turn to Allah totally and completely, and act upon the teachings of their religion. All actions revolve around *khushū'-ul-qalb*. Sayyidnā Shaddād Ibn Aws ؓ narrates that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "The first thing that will be taken away from the people will be their humility or humbleness [*khushū'*]." [Ibn Kathīr]

Is every Believer a 'Ṣiddīq' and a 'Shahīd'?

وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرُسُلِهِ أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الصَّادِقُونَ وَالشَّهَدَاءُ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ "And those who believed in Allah and His messengers, it is they who are the *ṣiddīqs* [the most righteous] and the *shuhadā'* (martyrs) in the sight of your Lord.57:19) This verse indicates that every 'believer' is a 'Ṣiddīq' and a 'Shahīd'. On the basis of this verse Qatādah and 'Amr Ibn Maimūn maintain that anyone who believes in Allah and His Messenger is a 'Ṣiddīq' and a 'Shahīd'. Ibn Jarīr reports that Sayyidnā Bara' Ibn 'Āzib ؓ narrates that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "مُؤْمِنُوا أَمْتِي شُهَدَاءُ" "The believers of my Ummah are all Shahīds (martyrs)." In support of this, he recited the current verse.

Ibn Abī Ḥatīm reports that Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ؓ narrates that one day some of the Companions had gathered around him, and he stated "كُلُّكُمْ صَادِقٌ وَشَهِيدٌ" "Each one of you is a 'Ṣiddīq' and a 'Shahīd'". This startled them and they exclaimed: "What are you saying, Abū Hurairah?" He replied: "If you do not believe me, then read the present verse [19] وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرُسُلِهِ أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الصَّادِقُونَ وَالشَّهَدَاءُ"

However, another verse of the Qur'ān seems to be against this concept. It is the verse [4:69]: فَأُولَٰئِكَ مَعَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ مِنَ النَّبِيِّينَ وَالصَّادِقِينَ وَالشَّهَدَاءِ (And those who obey Allah and the Messenger are with those whom Allah has blessed, namely, the Prophets, the Ṣiddiqīn, the

Shuhadā' and the righteous...) This indicates that not every believer is a 'Ṣiddīq' and a 'Shahīd' because in addition to the Prophets, the general body of Muslims comprise three categories of believers who are specially mentioned: [1] the Ṣiddīqin; [2] the Shuhadā'; and [3] the righteous. It would appear that the three categories are distinctly different. Otherwise, there would have been no need to mention them separately. Therefore, some scholars believe that the 'Ṣiddīqin' and the 'Shuhadā'' in fact constitute the highest and most sublime categories bearing the supreme attributes. Here all believers are referred to as 'Ṣiddīq' and 'Shahīd' in the sense that every believer is in some degree included in the group of 'Ṣiddīqin' and 'Shuhadā'. Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī states that it is appropriate to believe that the verse under comment refers to people who have perfect faith and perform deeds of righteousness. Otherwise, people who are believers but indulge in deeds that are not in keeping with the dictates of their faith can hardly be called 'Ṣiddīq' or 'Shahīd'.

The Holy Prophet ﷺ is reported to have said: **الْعَانُونَ لَا يَكُونُونَ شُهَدَاءَ** (The cursers cannot be 'Shuhadā'). This Tradition supports the notion. Sayyidnā 'Umar Al-Fārūq ؓ once said to the people: "What is the matter with you? You see someone defaming people, you neither stop him nor do you raise your eyebrows about it! They replied: 'We are afraid of his violent tongue. If we tell him something, he will also attack our honour.' Sayyidnā 'Umar ؓ made a rejoinder 'if that is the case, then you cannot be 'Shuhadā''. Ibn Athīr cited this narration and said: 'This means that such coward people will not be among the 'Shuhadā' who will bear witness against the communities of the previous Prophets.' [Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī]. Maḥzarī states that the word **الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا** 'believers' in verse [19] refers only to the Companions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ who reposed their faith in Allah and His Messenger, saw him and had the pleasure of his company. As such, the restrictive phrase, **هُمُ الصِّدِّيقُونَ** 'it is they who are the Ṣiddīqs..' in Verse [19] indicate that the status of Ṣiddīq is limited or restricted to the noble Companions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Mujaddid Alf Thānī states that all the noble Companions had a share in the noble qualities of prophet-hood. Any Companion who saw him in a state of faith even for a short time is absorbed and drowned in such qualities of perfection. Allah, the Pure and Exalted, knows best!

Verses 20 - 21

اعْلَمُوا أَنَّمَا الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا لَعِبٌ وَلَهُمْ زِينَةٌ وَتَفَاخُرٌ بَيْنَكُمْ وَتَكَاثُرٌ
 فِي الْأَمْوَالِ وَالْأَوْلَادِ ۖ كَمَثَلِ غَيْثٍ أَعْجَبَ الْكُفَّارَ نَبَاتُهُ ثُمَّ يَهِيجُ
 فَتَرَاهُ مُصْفَرًّا ثُمَّ يَكُونُ حُطَامًا ۖ وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ عَذَابٌ شَدِيدٌ ۚ وَمَغْفِرَةٌ
 مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَرِضْوَانٌ ۖ وَمَا الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا إِلَّا مَتَاعُ الْغُرُورِ ﴿٢٠﴾
 سَابِقُوا إِلَىٰ مَغْفِرَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَجَنَّةٍ عَرْضُهَا كَعَرْضِ السَّمَاءِ
 وَالْأَرْضِ ۚ أُعِدَّتْ لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرُسُلِهِ ۖ ذَلِكَ فَضْلُ اللَّهِ يُؤْتِيهِ
 مَن يَشَاءُ ۖ وَاللَّهُ ذُو الْفَضْلِ الْعَظِيمِ ﴿٢١﴾

Know well that the worldly life is but a play and an amusement, and a show of beauty, and exchange of boastful claims between you, and a competition of increase in riches and children. (All this is) like a rain, the vegetation of which attracts the farmers, then it withers, and you see it turning yellow, then it becomes straw. And in the Hereafter there is a severe punishment (for the disbelievers), and forgiveness from Allah and (Allah's) pleasure (for the believers and the righteous). And the worldly life is nothing but a material of delusion. [20] Compete each other in proceeding towards forgiveness from your Lord, and to Paradise the width of which is like the width of the sky and the earth. It has been prepared for those who believe in Allah and His messengers. That is the bounty of Allah that He gives to whomever He wills, and Allah is the Lord of the great bounty. [21]

The Life of this World is Fleeting Enjoyment

The preceding verses described the conditions of the inmates of Paradise and those of the inhabitants of Hell, which will materialize in the Hereafter and will be permanent and eternal. Since the basic cause for one's deprivation of the bounties of the Hereafter and his being seized by the divine punishment is his involvement in the temporary pleasures of this worldly life that tempt him to forget the life to come, the verse under comment describes the reality of the worldly life and its being unreliable. The verse depicts the involvements of a human being that he

cheerfully enjoys from the inception of his life up to its end. The verse summarizes these involvements in the same order in which they occur. From the inception to the end of his life, man leads his life in the following order: *la'ib* [play], *lahw* [amusement], *zīnah* [show of beauty], *tafākhur* [exchange of boastful claims] and *takāthur* [competition of increase in riches and children].

The word *la'ib* (play) refers to a play that has no purpose at all, like the movements of little children. The *lahw* [amusement or pastime] is a game or sport meant initially for amusement and enjoyment, but it may serve also some other subsidiary purpose like physical exercise. It includes all the sports of the bigger children such as playing with a ball or swimming or target-shooting. Prophetic Traditions have termed swimming and target-shooting as good sports. The early stage of one's life is spent in play and amusement. Then comes a stage in his youth when man wants to adorn his body and dress and to show their beauty, which is described in the verse as '*zīnah*'. Then comes a stage in which man is tempted to prove his superiority over his mates and to make boastful claims. In old age, a keen competition and rivalry sets in to amass wealth and multiply children.

When man goes through a particular phase of life, he feels satisfied with it. But when that phase is over, he realizes its absurdity and hollowness and takes to the next phase of life. For example, a child is most fascinated with his phase of life and regards the stage of *la'ib* (play) the goal of his life. Should someone snatch one of his toys, he feels as much aggrieved as a big man is grieved by his valuable wealth and property being usurped. However, when he grows a little bigger, he realizes the things he deemed to be the goal of his life were nothing but some useless and absurd activities. The same thing happens in one's youth when he is attracted by adorned beauties. In old age, man gathers wealth and multiplies children. Power, prestige, pride and position are his capital goods and investments to wield dominance in life. The Qur'ān reminds him that this phase too will pass away. The next stage is *barzakh* [grave] followed by the Day of Resurrection. Man needs to think about those stages or phases of life because they are really eternal without an end. Allah has described the fleeting enjoyment of this world in such an order that the appropriate parable given in verse [20] follows naturally.

كَمَثَلِ غَيْثٍ أَعْجَبَ الْكُفَّارَ نَبَاتُهُ، ثُمَّ يَهِيجُ فَتَرَهُ مُضْفَرًا ثُمَّ يَكُونُ حُطَامًا (...[All this is] like a rain, the vegetation of which attracts the farmers, then it withers, and you see it turning yellow, then it becomes straw....57:20) The word *ghaith* means 'rain'. The word *kuffar*, being the plural of *kāfir*, is generally used as opposed to *mu'minin* [believers], in the sense of non-believers, but its literal sense carries the meaning of 'farmers' also. Some scholars have taken the word here in this literal sense, explicating that the farmers are happy to see the vegetation that grows in the aftermath of rain. Other commentators have taken the word *kuffar* in its popular sense of non-believers, explaining the verse to mean that the non-believers are attracted by the greenery. This explanation may be criticized on the ground that being happy with the greenery is not confined to non-believers, but also the believers admire the lush vegetation when it abounds in vigorous growth. The commentators have appraised the criticism thus: There is a world of difference between the happiness and admiration of a believer and that of a non-believer. A believer's pleasure is directed towards Allah. He believes that everything is the outcome of Allah's power, wisdom and mercy. He does not make it the goal of his life; he gives up the cherished and precious things of this mortal world in consideration for the higher, eternal things of the life yet to come in the Hereafter. That is the goal of his life he worries about. Therefore, any believer who fulfills the requirements of his faith is not attracted, even by the biggest wealth in this world as a *kāfir* does. That is why the attraction by the vegetation is attributed to a non-believer.

In short, the parable means that in the wake of rain vegetation of all sorts grows, and it pleases the farmers, especially the non-believers. But the vegetation soon turns yellow in colour, after being fresh and green. After that, the green fades away and become scattered particles of dust. This is example of mankind in this life. They are young and strong in the beginning. In this stage of life, they look youthful and handsome. Gradually, old age overcomes them which does away with all their beauty and freshness until they die and become dust. This parable indicates the end of this life, while in contrast, the Hereafter is surely coming, the significance of which is given in the following words:

وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ عَذَابٌ شَدِيدٌ ۖ وَمَغْفِرَةٌ مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَرِضْوَانٌ (...And in the Hereafter there is a severe punishment [for the disbelievers], and forgiveness from Allah and

[Allah's] pleasure [for the believers and the righteous] ...57:20). In the Hereafter the people will certainly have to face one of two things: [1] severe punishment for the non-believers; and [2] forgiveness of Allah, His mercy and His good pleasure. Punishment has been mentioned here first, because the preceding verses described the behavior of the infidels that they are over-absorbed in worldly pleasures, the outcome of which is also severe chastisement. As opposed to this outcome, two things have been laid down for the believers: [1] Divine forgiveness; and [2] Divine pleasure. This indicates that forgiveness of sins is though a boon that saves one from the punishment, yet in addition to being saved from the punishment, he will attain Paradise and its eternal favors. This will be the manifestation of Divine pleasure.

وَمَا الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا إِلَّا مَتَاعُ الْغُرُورِ (And the worldly life is nothing but a material of delusion....57:20) The current phrase states concisely the reality of this world. Having seen and understood all that has been explained in the foregoing verses about the transitory nature of this world, sound and intelligent people can come to only one conclusion: that is, the life of this world is a material of delusion; it is not a capital that may be useful in odd times. Therefore, after knowing the reality of the worldly life and the punishment of the Hereafter, a reasonable man should not be over-involved in worldly pleasures, and should be eager to obtain the bounties of the Hereafter. This is what the next verses say.

سَابِقُوا إِلَىٰ مَغْفِرَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَجَنَّةٍ عَرْضُهَا كَعَرْضِ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ (Compete each other in proceeding towards forgiveness from your Lord and to Paradise, the width of which is like the width of the sky and the earth ...57:21) The competition or race referred to in this verse may have either of the two meanings: [1] No one has a guarantee for the continuance of his life, health and strength. One should not procrastinate, delay, defer, or put off performing righteous deeds for future, because the time might not come on account of illness, any inability or even death. One should race against inability, weakness and death, so that one may accumulate the treasure of good deeds that may lead one to Paradise before such disabilities may arrive and stop one from the good deeds. [2] Another meaning may be to compete with one another in good deeds, as Sayyidnā ‘Alī ؑ advises: "Be among the first ones to go to the mosque and the last ones to come out." Sayyidnā ‘Abdullah Ibn Mas‘ūd ؑ advises: "Go forward to be in the first

line of *jihād*." Sayyidnā Anas رضي الله عنه states: "Try to be present for the first *takbīr* of the congregational prayer." [Rūḥ]

The verse under comment defines that Paradise will be as wide as the heaven and the earth. A similar verse occurs in Sūrah Al-‘Imrān [3:133] where the word '*skies*' is plural, whereas here the word *sama'* (sky) is singular, from which we gather that both the words, the singular as well as the plural, refer to all the seven heavens, meaning if the vastness of the seven heavens and the earth are put together, that will be the width of Paradise. Obviously, the length of anything is greater than its breadth. This shows that the length of Paradise is greater than the length of the seven heavens and earth. Sometimes the word width or breadth is used in the general sense of 'vastness' irrespective of its length. In both cases, the purport of the verse is to describe that Paradise is very vast, so vast that it can accommodate the entire heavens and the earth in its vastness .

ذَلِكَ فَضْلُ اللَّهِ يُؤْتِيهِ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَاللَّهُ ذُو الْفَضْلِ الْعَظِيمِ (That is the bounty of Allah that He gives to whomever He wills, and Allah is the Lord of the great bounty...57:21) The foregoing verse enjoined upon us to march forth and compete each other in marching to Paradise and its bounties. This could give rise to the thought that Paradise and its eternal pleasures and delights are the direct result of our actions. This verse clarifies the point that good actions are not necessarily the sufficient cause for the attainment of Paradise. Man's life-long actions cannot be an adequate price even for the bounties he has received in this world, let alone the everlasting bounties of Paradise and its eternal blessings. Anyone who enters Paradise will do so out of Allah's grace and mercy, as is mentioned in a Prophetic Ḥadīth, recorded in Ṣaḥīḥain on the authority of Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضي الله عنه who reports that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ has said: "No one will attain salvation by means of his actions only." The Companions enquired: "Not even you, O Messenger of Allah?" He replied: "No, not even I will attain Paradise because of my actions, unless Allah bestows His grace and compassion on me." [Maḥzarī]

Verses 22 - 24

مَا أَصَابَ مِنْ مُصِيبَةٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا فِي أَنْفُسِكُمْ إِلَّا فِي كِتَابٍ مِّنْ

قَبْلِ أَنْ نَبْرَأَهَا ۚ إِنَّ ذَلِكَ عَلَى اللَّهِ يَسِيرٌ ﴿٢٢﴾ لِكَيْلَا تَأْسَوْا عَلَى
مَا فَاتَكُمْ وَلَا تَفْرَحُوا بِمَا آتَاكُمْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ كُلَّ مُخْتَالٍ فَخُورٍ
﴿٢٣﴾ الَّذِينَ يَبْخُلُونَ وَيَأْمُرُونَ النَّاسَ بِالْبُخْلِ ۗ وَمَنْ يَتَوَلَّ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ
هُوَ الْغَنِيُّ الْحَمِيدُ ﴿٢٤﴾

No calamity befalls the earth or your own selves, but it is (pre-destined) in a Book before We bring it into being, Indeed it is easy for Allah. [22] so that you may neither grieve on what has escaped you, nor over-exult on what He has given you. And Allah does not love any self-admirer, over-proud, [23] those who are miserly and bid others to be miserly. And whoever turns away, then Allah is the All-Independent, the Ever-Praised. [24]

Factors affecting Mankind are duly measured and destined

There are two sets of factors that make man unmindful of Allah and the Hereafter: [1] wealth, comfort and other luxuries of this world; one's over-involvement in such luxuries makes him neglectful of Allah. The previous verses have warned against it. [2] calamities, problems and other hardships that cause one to be hopeless and in turn neglectful towards Allah. The current set of verses deal with this second cause of negligence.

مَا أَصَابَ مِنْ مُصِيبَةٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا فِي أَنْفُسِكُمْ إِلَّا فِي كِتَابٍ مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ نَبْرَأَهَا (No calamity befalls the earth or your own selves, but it is [pre-destined] in a Book before We bring it into being57:22) The expression 'Book' refers to 'Preserved Tablet [*lawḥ mahfūẓ*]' and the verse means that Allah had measured and decided the destiny of all things even before He created them. The expression 'No affliction befalls in the earth' refers to famine, earthquake, destruction of crops, loss in business, loss of wealth and property and loss of friends and loved ones. The expression 'in yourselves' refers to illnesses of all sorts, all kinds of wounds, hurt and injury.

Patience and Gratitude

لِكَيْلَا تَأْسَوْا عَلَى مَا فَاتَكُمْ وَلَا تَفْرَحُوا بِمَا آتَاكُمْ (...so that you may neither grieve on what has escaped you, nor over-exult on what He has given you ...57:23) This means that Allah has informed us of His encompassing knowledge, recording all things before they occur and creating all things in due measure known to Him, so that we may know that what has met us

would never have missed us, and what has missed us would never have met us. Therefore, we are commanded not to over-grieve on the good things we have missed, nor to over-exult on the comforts or wealth we enjoyed in this life, and in turn be neglectful about Allah and the Hereafter. Sayyidnā ‘Abdullah Ibn ‘Abbās رضي الله عنه says that it is man's natural disposition that certain things cheer him up and other things make him miserable, whereas the true position should have been as follows: When any misery befalls him, he should endure it with patience and earn reward in the Hereafter, and when he experiences joy, he should experience it with gratitude to Allah and earn reward in the Hereafter. [Reported by Ḥakīm who rates it as *ṣaḥīḥ*. See Rūḥ]

وَاللَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ كُلَّ مُخْتَالٍ فَخُورٍ (...And Allah does not love any self-admirer, over-proud...57:23) The expression "does not love" in fact implies that Allah 'hates' those who become proud of the bounties they enjoy in this world. But instead of using the word 'hates' the expression 'does not love' is perhaps an indication that an intelligent person should consider about all his actions whether or not the intended act is dear to Allah. This is the reason why the verse uses the phrase 'does not love'.

Verse 25

لَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا رُسُلَنَا بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ وَأَنْزَلْنَا مَعَهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْمِيزَانَ لِيَقُومَ
النَّاسُ بِالْقِسْطِ ۖ وَأَنْزَلْنَا الْحَدِيدَ فِيهِ بَأْسٌ شَدِيدٌ وَمَنْفَعٌ لِلنَّاسِ
وَلِيَعْلَمَ اللَّهُ مَنْ يَنْصُرُهُ وَرُسُلَهُ بِالْغَيْبِ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ قَوِيٌّ عَزِيزٌ ﴿٢٥﴾

We have indeed sent Our messengers with clear proofs, and sent down with them the Book and the Balance, so that people may uphold justice. And We sent down iron in which there is strong power, and benefits for the people; and (We did it) so that Allah knows the one who helps Him and His messengers without seeing (Him). Surely Allah is Strong, Mighty. [25]

Establishing Justice: The Real Purpose of sending Prophets and Divine Books

لَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا رُسُلَنَا بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ وَأَنْزَلْنَا مَعَهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْمِيزَانَ لِيَقُومَ النَّاسُ بِالْقِسْطِ ۖ
وَأَنْزَلْنَا الْحَدِيدَ فِيهِ بَأْسٌ شَدِيدٌ

We have indeed sent Our messengers with clear proofs, and sent down with them the Book and the Balance, so that people may uphold justice. And We sent down iron in which there is strong power, and benefits for the people; and [We did it] so that Allah knows the one who helps Him and His messengers without seeing [Him]. Surely Allah is Strong, Mighty (57:25)

The word *bayyināt* means 'clear' or 'evident' things. It could also mean 'clear injunctions'. It may refer to 'miracles, clear proofs and evidences of Prophet-hood and Messenger-ship. [Ibn Kathīr and Ibn Ḥayyān]. After *bayyināt*, the mention sending down the Book supports the last interpretation, that is, *bayyināt* refers to 'miracles and proofs' and that 'the Book' sets out details of injunctions. In addition to the Book, another thing has been mentioned, which is *mīzān* [Balance or Scale]. Originally, this word refers to an instrument of weighing. Besides the customary balance, there are other kinds of instruments that are invented from time to time to weigh and measure other things. For example, nowadays we have instruments with which to weigh and measure 'light', 'wind' and other things. All these instruments will fall under the category of '*mīzān* [Balance]

This verse speaks of sending down 'the Balance' like 'the Book'. The notion of the Book coming down from the heaven and reaching the prophets through the agency of the angels is quite understandable. But it is not clear what it means for the Balance to come down. Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī, Mazḥarī and others have explained that 'the coming down of Balance' refers to the Divine laws that were revealed pertaining to the use of the Balance and administration of justice. Qurṭubī explains that it was the Book that was sent down, the Balance has been merely appended to the same verb but connoting the sense of inventing and placing. This is quite common in Arabic language and literature. Thus this sentence in full will read as follows: *أَنْزَلْنَا الْكِتَابَ وَوَضَعْنَا الْمِيزَانَ* (We sent down the Book and placed the Scale.) The readers may compare this verse with verse [7] of Sūrah Ar-Raḥmān *وَالسَّمَاءَ رَفَعَهَا وَوَضَعَ الْمِيزَانَ* (And He raised the sky high, and placed the scale...55:7) where Scale is said to have been set up or placed.

Some Traditions narrate that a balance was actually sent down from the heavens to Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام and he was enjoined to weigh with it and fulfill the rights of people. Allah knows best!

Alongside 'the Book' and 'the Balance', a third thing was sent down, that is, 'the iron'. The verb 'sent down' in relation to the iron stands for 'created' because it was not sent down from the heaven. There are other occasions where the verb *anzala* [He sent down] is used in the sense of *khalaqa* [He created], as for instance in this verse وَأَنْزَلَ لَكُمْ مِنَ الْأَنْعَامِ ثَمَنِيَةَ أَزْوَاجٍ (He sent down to you of the cattle eight couples...39:6) In this verse, the verb *anzala* [He sent down] is unanimously used in the sense of *khalaqa* [He created]. This expression is adopted to indicate that everything in this world is 'sent down from the heaven' in the sense that everything that exists in the world was recorded in the Preserved Tablet long before it came into existence. [Ruḥ-ul-Ma'ānī]

According to the verse, 'iron' serves two purposes: [1] it represent power and holds the hostile opponents in great awe, and may compel the rebellious people to abide by Divine laws and system of justice. [2] it also holds great benefits for man. In other words, iron is a thing of common utility as it is used on a large scale in various industries. It is indispensable for the invention of every device, machine, mechanical apparatus, contrivance, and there is some iron in almost everything man innovates. No contrivance is possible without iron.

Special Note [1]

The fundamental purpose of sending the Prophets, revealing the divine books and erecting the Balance is mentioned as follows: لِيُقِيمُوا النَّاسَ بِالْقِسْطِ (so that people may uphold justice...57:25) After that a third element is introduced: the creation of 'iron'. This, in fact, complements the same basic purpose of 'administration of justice' because the Prophets and the Divine Books set forth clear and sound arguments to establish justice. If the defiant group fails to establish it, it is warned about punishment in the Hereafter. The 'Balance' sets up the parameters within which justice should operate. If the defiant group obdurately refuses to accept the parameters of justice and is left free to go about violating them, he will not allow justice to be established. In this case, the higher authority of the state will have no choice but to take up arms against them.

Special Note [2]

Another point of consideration here is that the Holy Qur'ān has set forth two factors as fundamental to the establishment of justice: [1] the Book; and [2] the Balance. The Book sets forth the Divine rights and the

human rights, and the need to fulfil them; it prohibits their violation. The Balance lays down the system which maintains just equilibrium in human social relations. The purpose of revealing these two factors is لِيَقُومَ النَّاسُ بِالْقِسْطِ (so that people may uphold justice...57:25) The factor of 'iron' has been mentioned last. This indicates that in the establishment of justice iron may be used only as a last resort, not as the first step. The real purpose of improving human society and establishing justice among them is to improve them in intellectual development and growth. The government may not exert its might and power to achieve the purpose of developing them intellectually. It may use it, only as the ultimate option, if they stand in the way of justice. The main thing is to cultivate the minds of the people by educating them.

وَلِيَعْلَمَ اللَّهُ مَنْ يَنْصُرُهُ وَرُسُلَهُ بِالْغَيْبِ (...and [We did it] so that Allah knows the one who helps Him and His messengers without seeing57:25) Here the conjunction 'and', according to Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī, explains that this subjunctive phrase is conjoined to another subjunctive phrase that is understood in the context: لِيَنْفَعَهُمْ (so that it may benefit them) in their trade and industry; so that Allah may legally and outwardly know who will assist Him and His Messenger by carrying weapons of war made of iron and fight *jihād* in defence of His religion'. The restrictive adverbs 'legally and outwardly' have been added because Allah knows everything pre-eternally as He pre-recorded them in the Book of Decrees, and when man performs the action, it is recorded in his Account Book by the angels. In this way, its legal manifestation becomes plainly apparent.

Verses 26- 29

وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا نُوحًا وَإِبْرَاهِيمَ وَجَعَلْنَا فِي ذُرِّيَّتِهِمَا النُّبُوَّةَ وَالْكِتَابَ
فَمِنْهُمْ مُهْتَدٍ ۖ وَكَثِيرٌ مِنْهُمْ فَسِقُونَ ﴿٢٦﴾ ثُمَّ قَفَّيْنَا عَلَىٰ آثَارِهِم
بِرُسُلِنَا وَقَفَّيْنَا بِعِيسَى ابْنِ مَرْيَمَ وَآتَيْنَاهُ الْإِنجِيلَ ۖ وَجَعَلْنَا فِي
قُلُوبِ الَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوهُ رَافَةً وَرَحْمَةً ۖ وَرَهَابِيَّةً ۖ ابْتَدَعُوهَا مَا كَتَبْنَاهَا
عَلَيْهِمْ إِلَّا ابْتِغَاءَ رِضْوَانِ اللَّهِ فَمَا رَعَوْهَا حَقَّ رِعَايَتِهَا ۖ فَآتَيْنَا الَّذِينَ
آمَنُوا مِنْهُمْ أَجْرَهُمْ ۖ وَكَثِيرٌ مِنْهُمْ فَسِقُونَ ﴿٢٧﴾ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا

اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَآمِنُوا بِرَسُولِهِ يُؤْتِكُمْ كِفْلَيْنِ مِنْ رَحْمَتِهِ وَيَجْعَلْ لَكُمْ
نُورًا تَمْشُونَ بِهِ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿٢٨﴾ لَيْلًا يَعْلَمُ أَهْلُ
الْكِتَابِ إِلَّا يَقْدِرُونَ عَلَى شَيْءٍ مِنْ فَضْلِ اللَّهِ وَأَنَّ الْفَضْلَ بِيَدِ اللَّهِ
يُؤْتِيهِ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَاللَّهُ ذُو الْفَضْلِ الْعَظِيمِ ﴿٢٩﴾

And we have indeed sent Nūḥ and Ibrāhīm, and kept the Book and prophet-hood (continuing) in their progeny. So, some of those (to whom they were sent) were on the right path, and many of them were sinners. [26] Then We made Our messengers follow them one after the other, then We sent after them 'Īsā, the son of Maryam (Jesus, son of Mary), and gave him the Injīl, and placed tenderness and mercy in the hearts of his followers. As for monasticism, it was invented by them; We did not ordain it for them, but (they adopted it) to seek Allah's pleasure, then could not observe it as was due. So We gave those of them who believed their reward. And many of them are sinners. [27] O those who believe, fear Allah, and believe in His Messenger, and He will give you two shares (of reward) out of His mercy, and will make for you a light whereby you will walk, and will forgive you, And Allah is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful. [28] so that the People of the Book may know that they have no power over any thing from Allah's bounty, and that bounty is in Allah's hand; He gives it to whom He wills, and Allah is the Lord of the great bounty. [29]

Many of the Nations of the Prophets were Rebellious

In the preceding verses it was mentioned that in order to give guidance to the world and to establish justice therein, Allah sent His Messengers and revealed to them the divine books and set up Balance. The current verses give specific names of some of those Divine Messengers. Among them, Prophet Nūḥ عليه السلام stands first in the list, because he is second 'Ādam عليه السلام in the sense that all human beings after the Deluge were from his progeny. Then the Prophet Ibrāhīm Khalīl-ullah عليه السلام is mentioned as he is the father of the prophets and recognized as an ideal for all the divine religions. It has been made plain here that all the Prophets and Messengers sent after these two prophets were from their offspring. Out of many branches of the progeny of

Nuḥ (عليه السلام), the branch singled out for prophet-hood was that of Prophet Ibrāhīm Khalīl-ullah (عليه السلام). After specific mention of these two Prophets, the whole chain of prophets is referred to by the words, ثُمَّ فَفَعَيْنَا عَلَىٰ آثَارِهِم بِرُسُلِنَا, "Then We made Our messengers follow them one after the other". Lastly, 'Isā (عليه السلام) has been specifically mentioned, as he was the last among the Israelite prophets. Then the Last of all prophets Sayyidnā Muḥammad (ﷺ) and his Shari'ah has a pointed reference in the next verse.

The special characteristics of the disciples of Prophet 'Isā (عليه السلام) are given in part of verse 27 as follows: وَجَعَلْنَا فِي قُلُوبِ الَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوهُ رَأْفَةً وَرَحْمَةً (...and placed tenderness and mercy in the hearts of his followers) In other words, Allah inculcated two qualities in the hearts of the followers of Prophet 'Isā (عليه السلام) and his Divine Book Injīl [Gospel]: [1] tenderness and [2] mercy. As a result, they showed tenderness and compassion to one another. Or it could mean that they showed tenderness and kindness to the entire creation of Allah.

Generally, the two words *ra'fah* (tenderness) and *rahmah* (mercy) are treated as synonyms or near-synonyms, but since they are employed here in opposition to each other, some lexicologists explained that the word *ra'fah* is stronger in degree than the word *rahmah*. Others have explained that there are two requirements of tenderness and mercy. The word *ra'fah* means to alleviate the calamity of someone, while the word *rahmah* means to give to someone what he needs. In short, *ra'fah* is concerned with repelling harm and *rahmah* is concerned with deriving benefit. As 'repelling harm' is normally prior to 'deriving benefit', *ra'fah* takes precedence over *rahmah* when the two words are expressed simultaneously.

On this occasion, 'tenderness' and 'mercy' are mentioned as the special characteristics of the disciples [*Howāriyyūn*] of the Prophet 'Isā (عليه السلام). Similarly, some characteristics of the blessed Companions of the Holy Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ) are given in Sūrah Al-Faṭḥ, one of which is رُحَمَاءُ بَيْنَهُمْ (...compassionate among themselves....48:29). But another characteristic of them is given before this as: أَيْدِيَهُمْ عَلَى الْكُفَّارِ (...hard against the disbelievers48:29). The reason for this difference seems to be that there were no laws pertaining to *jihād* against the non-believers in the Shari'ah of the Prophet 'Isā (عليه السلام). Therefore, there was no occasion for them to be hard against the disbelievers. Allah knows best!

Monasticism: An Analysis

وَرَهْبَانِيَّةً ابْتَدَعُوهَا (...As for monasticism, it was invented by them;). The word *rahbāniyyah* (monasticism) is attributed to *ruhbān*. The words *rāhib* (singular) and *ruhbān* (plural) mean 'the one who fears'. After Prophet ʿĪsā ﷺ, transgression became common. In particular, the kings and the leaders publicly defied the laws of the Gospel. When the scholars and the righteous people among them attempted to stop them from doing evil deeds, they were put to death. Those that remained, felt that they would not be able to stop them, nor did they have the power of resistance. If they lived in society, there was every likelihood that their religion too would be destroyed. Therefore, they took upon themselves in earnest that they would give up all pleasures and comforts of this life including the legitimate ones. Thus they avoided marriage, abandoned any activity to earn livelihood and any effort to build homes, and took to jungles, mountains and caves, or took to nomadic life in order to protect their religion and follow their religious duties freely and completely. They did all this out of fear of God. Therefore, they were referred to as *rāhib* or *ruhbān*. Their practice is referred to as *rahbāniyyah*.

As the Christians introduced monasticism under forced circumstances in order to protect their faith, it was not reproachable in its origin. But once anyone has imposed anything on himself, it becomes binding on him, and its violation is a sin. For example, making a vow for an act of worship is not obligatory. But if a person were to vow to do an act of worship or abstain from a lawful thing, it becomes binding on him in Shari'ah to maintain the vow; its violation becomes a sin. Some of the Christian monks invented monasticism with the best of intentions, but there were others who could not endure the hardships of monastic life and soon succumbed to the pursuit of material gains and physical pleasures when the general body of people believed in them, offered them gifts and oblations. History bears ample testimony to the fact that the monks who detested the system of marriage indulged in indecent acts and fornication. (The free intermingling of men and women in monasteries turned those places into centres of evil.)

The current verse denounces the practice of the monks who imposed monasticism upon themselves, and once they had imposed it, they should have observed its requirements which they did not.

That there was nothing wrong originally in what they had introduced as *rahbaniyyah* is proved by a Ḥadīth narrated by Sayyidnā ‘Abdullah Ibn Mas‘ūd رضي الله عنه and recorded by Ibn Kathīr with reference to Ibn Abī Ḥātim and Ibn Jarīr who have cited a lengthy narration in which the Messenger of Allah ﷺ is reported to have said:

"Allah has split the Children of Israel into seventy-two sects. Only three of them were saved from punishment. These are groups who, after Prophet ‘Isā عليه السلام, stopped the oppressive kings and affluent and powerful transgressors from violating the Divine laws. Among those who raised the voice of Truth against them and invited them to the religion of Prophet ‘Isā عليه السلام, the first group faced the oppressors with whatever power they had at their command, but they were defeated and killed. Then after them a second group stood against the tyrants and aggressors who did not have even that much fighting strength as the first group had. However they conveyed the Truth without caring for their lives. This group too was killed. Some of them were ripped apart with saws and others were burnt alive. But they, for the sake of Allah's pleasure, bore all pains and attained salvation. Then a third group stood against them. But this group was weak: They had no resources to fight the tyrants nor could they live in that corrupt society and follow their religion. Therefore, they took to the jungles and mountains, and became monks. It is to this third group that Allah refers in the current verse وَرَهْبَانِيَّةً ابْتَدَعُوهَا مَا كَتَبْنَاهَا عَلَيْهِمْ 'As for monasticism, it was invented by them; We did not ordain it for them, ...!'"

This narration indicates that the people who originally adopted monasticism from among the Israelites and took care of its essentials and endured its hardships were among those who attained salvation.

According to this interpretation, the present verse shows that the monasticism initially adopted by such people was not bad or evil in itself, though it was not a religious obligation either. They had made it obligatory on themselves at their own will and wish. The element of evil

starts from the fact that after making it binding on themselves, most of them were not able to keep to its essentials. As a result, in keeping with the adage *إِلَّا أَكْثَرُ حُكْمِ الْكُلِّ* (Majority takes the status of all), the Qur'ān attributed this evil aspect to the entire Israelites in that they invented it and could not practice it and did not take care of its requirements : *فَمَارَعَوْهَا* *حَقَّ رِعَايَتِهَا* (...but [they adopted it] to seek Allah's pleasure, then could not observe it as was due.57:27).

It is also learnt from the above discussion that the word *ibtidā'*, derived from *bid'ah*, used in *إِبتَدَعُوا* (...it was invented by them ...) is used in its literal sense of invention, and not in its technical or religious sense of heresy. The religious concept of *bid'ah* (which refers to a baseless faith or practice that is made part of the religion) has been denounced in the following narration of the Holy Prophet ﷺ *كُلُّ بِدْعَةٍ ضَلَالَةٌ* (Every religious innovation is deviation).

The context of the verse is very clear about it. Let us first study the following sentence: *وَجَعَلْنَا فِي قُلُوبِ الَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوهُ رَأْفَةً وَرَحْمَةً وَرَهْبَانِيَّةً* (And We placed in the hearts of his followers tenderness and mercy and the monasticism they had invented; We did not prescribe it for them, except to seek Allah's pleasure. Then they did not observe it as was due...57:27) ⁽¹⁾ The context indicates that just as 'tenderness and mercy' are not evil qualities, likewise 'monasticism' which they adopted is not an evil quality in itself. Otherwise Allah would not have listed it alongside the favorable qualities of 'tenderness and mercy'. Scholars, like Qurtubī, who held monasticism as absolutely prohibited, had to face grammatical difficulties. They had to go out of their way to show that *rahbaniyyah* is not a part of the conjunctive expression joined together by the conjunction '*waw*' [and] They treated the sentence starting with "...and monasticism..." as a separate sentence, and understood the verb *ibtadā'* as omitted. The interpretation adopted above renders this construction unnecessary. That is why the Holy Qur'ān does not reject their adoption of monasticism in principle, but their failure to keep it up, and take care of its rights and

(1) It should be noted that according to the grammatical construction of this verse, it can be translated in two ways. One translation is given above in the text. The second possible translation is that which is given here. Since the following discussion is based on this second translation, we have adapted it here instead of the translation given in the text. **Muhammad Taqi Usmani**

obligations. This interpretation is possible only if the word *ibtidā'* (invention) is taken in its literal sense. Had it been employed in its religious or technical sense, the Qur'ān would have denounced adoption of monasticism in itself, because *bid'ah* (innovation in religion) in its technical sense is deviation.

Sayyidnā 'Abdullān Ibn Mas'ūd's ﷺ foregoing narration makes it clear that the groups that adopted monastic life attained salvation. If they were guilty of committing religious innovation, they would never have been counted among the saved ones, but rather among the deviant ones.

Is *rahbaniyyah* (Monasticism) absolutely Prohibited or is it a relative Concept?

The fact is that *rahbaniyyah* (translated as monasticism) generally means to give up some lawful things and pleasures. It has several stages, one of which is to treat a permissible thing as impermissible doctrinally or practically. This is distortion of religion. From this point of view, monasticism is absolutely prohibited as declared by the Holy Qur'ān at several places, like verse [87] of Sūrah Al-Mā'idah that lays down the principle *يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَحْرِمُوا طَيِّبَاتِ مَا أَحَلَّ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ* (O believers, do not prohibit the good things which Allah has made lawful to you...) The prohibitive verb ('do not prohibit') in this verse indicates that it relates to a situation where a person holds unlawful what Allah has made lawful, either in his belief or in practice, and as such it will amount to distortion or perversion of the Divine laws.

The second stage is when a person does not, dogmatically or practically, turn a lawful thing into unlawful, but gives it up for some mundane or religious reason. In mundane affairs, a person might give up eating a lawful thing on account of some disease. In religious matters, a person might give up the company of people and mixing with them, lest he should commit moral sins like lying and backbiting, or he might abandon some permissible things temporarily in order to suppress his base desires. This restriction is no more than a treatment of a spiritual disease. When the treatment is over, the restriction is no longer observed. Some Ṣūfī adepts require a novice in the initial stages of his spiritual journey to exercise ascetic discipline, such as eating little, sleeping little and mixing little with people. This brings him to a state of greater harmony and balance [*I'tidāl*]. This ascetic discipline is a 'means' and not an 'end' in

itself. When the perfect balance is attained and the *nafs* (inner-self) is brought under control, and there is no longer the danger of committing sins, they are asked to give up the exercise. This in fact is not monasticism but *taqwā* or righteousness which the religion requires and was practiced by our predecessors, the blessed Companions, their followers and the leaders in religion.

The third stage is when a person does not turn a permissible thing into unlawful. However, he abstains from its use under the belief that its giving up has more virtue and carries more reward, while such use is proved through *Sunnah* (the practice of the Holy Prophet ﷺ). This is in fact *ghuluww* (over-indulgence). Many of the Prophetic Traditions prohibit *ghuluww*.

The Holy Prophet ﷺ is reported to have said: لَا رَهْبَانِيَّةَ فِي الْإِسْلَامِ (There is no monasticism in Islam.) This relates to a situation where someone abandons permissible things with the mistaken notion that it will bring him reward. If the Children of Israel initiated monasticism for the protection of their religion, it will fall under the second category of righteousness. But the people of the book were given to *ghuluww* or practicing religious fanaticism. If they turned lawful into unlawful, they fell under the first category and are guilty of committing *ḥarām*. If they fall under the third category, then too they are guilty of committing something that is condemned. Allah, the Pure and Exalted, knows best!

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَآمِنُوا بِرُسُولِهِ يُؤْتِكُمْ كُفْلَيْنِ مِنْ رَحْمَتِهِ (O those who believe, fear Allah, and believe in His Messenger, and He will give you two shares [of reward] out of His mercy,...28) The vocative expression "يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا" "O those who believe..." in this verse refers to the People of the Book who believed in Prophet 'Īsā عليه السلام. As a general rule, the Qur'ān uses this vocative expression for Muslims only, not for Jews or Christians. The expression used for them is *ahlul-kitāb* [People of the Book] because their believing in Prophets Mūsā and 'Īsā عليهما السلام is not tantamount to being 'believers'. They need to believe in the Holy Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ. Only in that case can they be called "الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا" "O those who believe". But here the Qur'ān deviates from the general rule, and addresses them by the words, "O those who believe" presumably because the concluding verse reminds the Christians that believing in Prophet 'Īsā عليه السلام is not sufficient: the true meaning of believing in Prophet 'Īsā عليه السلام dictates that they should believe

in the Last Prophet ﷺ. If they do, then they deserve to be called as الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا 'those who believe'.

Then the verse promises the People of the Book that believe in the Holy Prophet ﷺ, their reward will be doubled. The first reward is on account of their believing in Prophet 'Isā عليه السلام or Mūsā عليه السلام and following their Shari'ah, and the second reward is for their believing in the Holy Prophet ﷺ and acting upon his Shari'ah. The reason for their double reward is that Jews and Christians were unbelievers until they believed in the Holy Prophet ﷺ, and no worship of an unbeliever is acceptable. It required that any action they had performed according to a previous Shari'ah would go waste. But the present verse clarifies that when an unbeliever embraces Islam, all his good actions are restored, hence he is doubly rewarded.

لَعَلَّالْيَعْلَمَ أَهْلُ الْكِتَابِ (so that the People of the Book may know57:29) The negative particle *lā* [no] is grammatically redundant [but rhetorically it serves to emphasise the expression]. This final verse states that the People of the Book need to know that faith in Prophet 'Isā عليه السلام is not necessarily faith in the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ. In the circumstances, they do not deserve any Divine grace unless they embrace faith in the Last Prophet ﷺ. Allah, the Pure and Exalted, knows best!

Alḥamdulillah
The Commentary on
Sūrah Al-Ḥadīd
Ends here